

What is claimed is:

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1 1. A method of assigning a user to a network chat
2 room, the chat room for distributing messages received from
3 chat room members to other chat room members, the method
4 comprising:
5 determining television programming viewed by a
6 network user at a networked device; and
7 assigning the network user to a chat room
8 corresponding to the determined television programming.

1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein determining
2 comprises determining based on a channel tuned to by the
3 networked device.

1 3. The method of claim 1, wherein the networked
2 device comprises a set-top box that receives television
3 programming.

1 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the network
2 comprises the Internet.

1 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the chat room
2 comprises a chat room for a particular television show.

1 6. The method of claim 1, wherein the chat room
2 comprises a chat room for a particular network.

1 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising
2 receiving a message from a network user assigned to the chat
3 room and distributing the received message to other chat
4 room members.

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1 8. The method of claim 1, further comprising
2 determining whether to assign a person to a chat room.

1 9. The method of claim 8, wherein determining
2 whether to assign comprises determining how recently the
3 user was last assigned to a chat room.

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1 10. A method of assigning a user to a chat room,
2 the method comprising:
3 providing a user interface that displays television
4 programming;
5 transmitting identification of the television
6 programming to a network server; and
7 presenting a chat room that includes messages
8 received by the network server by other users viewing the
9 same television programming.

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1 11. The method of claim 10, wherein transmitting
2 identification comprises transmitting a channel number.

1 12. The method of claim 10, wherein transmitting
2 identification comprises transmitting a television network
3 identifier.

1 13. The method of claim 1, wherein transmitting
2 identification comprises transmitting an identifier of a
3 particular television program.

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1 14. The method of claim 1, wherein transmitting
2 comprises transmitting in response to a change of channel.

1 15. The method of claim 1, wherein transmitting
2 comprises transmitting in response to user interaction with
3 a user interface element.

1 16. A system for assigning a person to a chat room,
2 the system comprising:

3 server software resident on a network server, the
4 software including:

5 instructions for distributing messages received
6 by chat room members with other chat room members;

7 instructions for providing chat rooms
8 corresponding to different television programming; and
9 instructions for

10 determining the television programming
11 tuned to by a networked device that receives television
12 programming; and

13 assigning a network user using the set-top
14 box to a chat room based on the determined television
15 programming; and;

16 client software residing on a networked device, the
17 client software including:

18 instructions for transmitting identification of
19 the television programming being displayed by the networked
20 set-top box; and

21 instructions for displaying chat room messages
22 submitted by other chat room members.

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1 17. A computer program, disposed on a computer
2 readable medium, for assigning a user to a network chat
3 room, the chat room for distributing messages received from
4 chat room members to other chat room members, the program
5 including instructions for causing a processor to:

6 ~~Sub B'17~~ determine television programming viewed by a network
7 user at a networked device; and
8 assign the network user to a chat room corresponding
9 to the determined television programming.

1 18. A computer program, disposed on a computer
2 readable medium, for assigning a user to a chat room, the
3 program including instructions for causing a processor to:
4 provide a user interface that displays television
5 programming;
6 transmit identification of the television
7 programming to a network server; and
8 present a chat room that includes messages received
9 by the network server by other users viewing the same
10 television programming.

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